



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are safe and well.

As you will know from the government announcement last night, **all schools are to fully open from Monday 8th March and therefore all students will be returning to school during this week.** Therefore, I wanted to share some initial detail with you to keep you fully informed. We will also be in touch with further information next week.

The government outlined that secondary schools are able to implement a **phased return** during the week beginning the 8th March to allow all students to be tested on their return to school. As you can imagine, testing 1450 students for COVID-19 is a significant undertaking and we will therefore need to stagger the return of students throughout the week to ensure this is carried out in a safe, well-planned and effective manner, ensuring the health and safety of all students and staff. Therefore, **students will return to school on the following dates:**

- Monday 8th March- Year 13 and Year 11 students
- Tuesday 9th March- Year 12 and Year 10 students
- Wednesday 10th March- Year 9 students
- Thursday 11th March- Year 8 students
- Friday 12th March- Year 7 students

This will allow us to carry out the first in-school COVID-19 test of all students in a timely and safe manner and allow us to fully welcome back each year group, to help settle the students back into school and to embed all of the updated health and safety routines with the students. Following a negative test result, students will be allowed to begin their lessons in school as normal. Should any child test positive on their return, or at any other time, they will have to immediately go home to self-isolate. Of course, we will need your consent for your child to be tested and therefore, **following this letter you will be texted a further letter requiring your consent and other details.** We would really appreciate it, if you could return the completed form to us, as soon as possible. **Your child will also be given a specific time to arrive on their return date above,** as we need to stagger the arrival times of students to ensure robust social distancing, prior to their first COVID-19 test. Miss Lague, Assistant Headteacher Pastoral, will share further details about student routines with parents/carers next week, including your child's individual arrival time for their return day. The group of vulnerable children and children of critical workers who have been attending school during the national lockdown, will continue to be able to attend during the week beginning the 8th March and they will re-join the other students, once their year group returns to school.

As also outlined in the government guidance, students will be **tested 3 times in school** during the initial return period, each test being 3-5 days apart. Students will therefore already have returned to school by their second and third COVID-19 tests and so these further tests will be organised during the normal school day. Following these 3 in-school tests, **the government plans to provide all students with two rapid tests to use each week at home.** Staff will also take two tests each week at home. Once we receive more details regarding this home-testing, we will let you know. The government has also confirmed that if any students or staff test positive via a rapid test used at home at any time, they will have to complete the mandatory self-isolation period of 10 days at home. They should also be re-tested to confirm the positive home test result using a PCR test at one of the national testing centres. Also, as previously, any close contacts in school will also have to go home to self-isolate for 10 days.

All students and staff will continue to wear face masks in communal areas where social distancing may not be possible. In addition to this, the government have outlined that **all secondary school students will also wear face masks in classrooms during lessons** where social distancing cannot be maintained. This will be in place through until the Easter break. This is a temporary extra measure to support health and safety across schools in England. The exception will be lessons where students complete physical activity, such as PE lessons. Therefore, for the 4 remaining weeks of the half-term until Easter, students will

wear face masks in lessons. The government plan to review this policy at Easter. Students will be able to remove their face masks when outside, on the journey to and from school and at breaks and lunchtimes. There are, of course, a very small number of students who are exempt from wearing a face mask for medical reasons.

In terms of **teaching and learning**, the vast majority of students will be in school and therefore will be taught in lessons as normal. We will also provide work for any students who are self-isolating to complete at home, as previously. Hopefully, very few students will need to self-isolate during this half-term, but if this is needed, we will continue to provide excellent teaching and learning resources for the students. As I am sure you will understand, we will have to adapt our remote learning offer from the plan used during the national lockdown, given that teachers will now be teaching the vast majority of students in school, as well as setting work for any students self-isolating at home.

As mentioned, more detail on student routines for the return to school will be shared with parents and carers next week and this will include a return to the school day timings we used during the autumn term, with staggered break times, lunchtimes and staggered end times to the school day. Students will continue to study in year group zones and bubbles and robust health and safety measures will continue to be embedded.

We very much look forward to welcoming back all of our students. It will be lovely to have the school community back together once again.

Thank you for your continued support. It is much appreciated.

Very best wishes,



Miss Patterson
Headteacher